

Fwd: Post Cabinet - President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness Bill Blair - February 15, 2022

From: "Cullinan, Annie" <annie.cullinan@qpc-cpr.gc.ca>
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From: Media Centre / Centre des medias <MediaPortal@pco-bcp.gc.ca>
Date: February 15, 2022 at 1:46:05 PM EST
To: "Cullinan, Annie" <Annie.Cullinan@qpc-cpr.gc.ca>
Subject: Post Cabinet - President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness Bill Blair - February 15, 2022

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TRANSCRIPTION/TRANSCRIPTION SCRUM

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DATE/DATE: February 15, 2022 After Cabinet
LOCATION/ENDROIT: Outside Room 309-N, West Block, OTTAWA, ON
PRINCIPAL(S)/PRINCIPAUX: Bill Blair, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness.

SUBJECT/SUJET: President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness Bill Blair speaks to the media after a cabinet meeting.

Question: Minister Blair, Minister Blair, can you come here for the cameras, sir? Can you just (inaudible) right here? You probably hear that Chief Sloly has resigned. As a former chief yourself, what was — what do you think of that?

Hon. Bill Blair: I've known Chief Sloly for 25 years. I worked with the man. He's — he's a fundamentally decent man faced with a very difficult job, and — and frankly, I'm very saddened by this — this turn of events, and at the same time, I think there's — there is an important job yet to be done to restore order and — and — and — and provide effective policing services to the people of Ottawa; and I spoke to the mayor a little earlier and, you know, we're all committed to ensuring that we serve appropriately the people of Ottawa.

Question: What is your understanding about why he resigned at this time in the middle of a crisis?

Hon. Bill Blair: I — I have no insight into that.

Question: What impact do you think it's going to have on the handling of it?

Hon. Bill Blair: I think the institution of policing is important to the community. I think the people of Ottawa need delivery of effective police service and I'm — I'm going to do everything we can, as a government, to support the city of Ottawa to ensure that the RCMP, the OPP and other police services are here to help the Ottawa Police Services do the job. Again, I don't have any insight into the internal workings of — of the city or the police services, but we are all committed to do what is required to keep (inaudible – crosstalk) safe.

(crosstalk)

Hon. Bill Blair: One — one at a time.

Question: Who's in charge, sir? Who's in charge now — who's in charge?

Question: Do you think it's going to restore the confidence, the fact that he resigned?

Hon. Bill Blair: Again, I — with great respect, the — you know, the situation internal to the Ottawa Police Service, the Ottawa Police Services Board and the city of — of Ottawa... I — I will respectfully leave those decisions to them. But what is clear to me is that there's still a very significant job to be done, and I think we all need to work together to make sure that we get it done.

(crosstalk)

Question: Do — do you think providing more resources now to the Ottawa police — they will be able to clear this protest?

Hon. Bill Blair: Over the past two weeks, there has been a number of deployments of RCMP officers. I know the OPP are in town. As I've been out on the streets of Ottawa over the past two weeks, I've even seen, you know, Toronto police officers and — and their horses patrolling in Ottawa. But — but clearly, we need to make sure that the city of Ottawa, its police services but this city (sic) has adequate resources to do the job that is necessary in this community, and — and we'll continue to make sure that (inaudible – crosstalk)

Question: You're — you're — you're in charge of emergency preparedness now.

Hon. Bill Blair: Yes.

Question: Are you confident — who is in charge right now of the — dealing with the situation on the street, and are you confident that the Ottawa police is in good hands?

Hon. Bill Blair: The Ottawa Police Service — the city of Ottawa and the Ottawa Police Service are responsible for policing the community. However, I believe that all three orders of government, the federal government, the provincial government and the municipal government, have a responsibility to this country and to the people of Ottawa to ensure their safety and to restore order (crosstalk) and restore order in this community.

Question: (inaudible - crosstalk) press conference — press conference soon.

Hon. Bill Blair: And what — and you may all want to leave to go chase him. But — but I think we all have a responsibility here, and I've had that conversation with — with — with the mayor this morning. I know my colleague is speaking to the province. We will make sure that all three orders of government step up and do what is required —

Question: I don't hear you saying you — yes, you have confidence that the Ottawa police can handle this right now.

Hon. Bill Blair: I have confidence in the institution of policing, and — and in — in — in the power of the law to — to help bring resolution. We brought forward some pretty important measures yesterday that I think give us some fairly significant tools, particularly to create greater financial security — scrutiny and accountability for these actions. I'm very hopeful that those tools, including things like making sure that we have access to tow trucks if they're required, to

make sure that the RCMP officers when we deploy them into the city of Ottawa will have the authority to — to use all of the laws that are available to them... Those are the types of things that are included in our emergency act measures, and I believe those measures coupled with the steps and important work that the — the province did in the — in the declaration of an emergency and the — and the passing of their regulations, plus existing municipal, provincial and federal statutes — we now have the tools to do what needs to be done and — and we will make sure the resources are (inaudible – crosstalk)

Question: (crosstalk) So with that said, Minister Blair, how long do you think it's going to take before Ottawa notices a real difference in the streets?

Hon. Bill Blair: That — that work begins now and we have to continue with that work until we get the job done.

Question: But how long is it going to take before people see a noticeable difference, you know?

Hon. Bill Blair: Well — well, I think that there's an urgency to — to that response, and — and we are committed to that. We've — yesterday, we took I think extraordinary measures to bring it forward — the emergency act, in part, in response to the situation in Ottawa. We are working with law enforcement and with the municipality and the province in order to give that effect. I understand the urgency that's felt by the people of Ottawa that order needs to be restored. We are committed to beginning that work. We — we began that work two weeks ago, but clearly, much more needs to be done. We will do what's required.

(crosstalk)

Question: What did the mayor tell you? What did the mayor tell you?

Question: Can you provide assurance (inaudible – crosstalk) that there are no weapons in the trucks in Ottawa the way they were found in Coutts?

Hon. Bill Blair: No, I can't. I'm very concerned with the presence of weapons as determined in Ottawa. It's very clear that there is within the protest — and I don't want to label everyone at these protests as extremists, but there is an extremist element there. That — that is very concerning.

Question: Did you just say there's guns in the protest in Ottawa? You just said Ottawa. You didn't say Coutts.

Hon. Bill Blair: No, in Coutts. In Alberta —

Question: You said Ottawa.

Question: My question was about Ottawa. (inaudible)

Hon. Bill Blair: Well, then let me be very clear. There were guns found in — in Coutts yesterday by the RCMP, which is deeply concerning. I have no information or intelligence. I'm not a police officer in this community, with respect to whether or not there are firearms in this situation. But we are concerned about public safety. We're always concerned about — well, public safety and the safety of — of our officials, particularly the police who are responding.

Moderator: Last question.

Question: What did the mayor say to you?

Hon. Bill Blair: The mayor and I talked about what we now need to do in order to — to restore peace and — and the rule of law in Ottawa, and — and that's what we talked about.

Question: Are you content the mayor has actually made a deal with the protesters to move their trucks up onto Wellington from residential areas?

Hon. Bill Blair: I understand the mayor has a responsibility to — to the people of his city, and he's going to do whatever he thinks is right in order to — to restore peace to his community, and — and we're committed to doing everything possible to — to work with our municipal and provincial partners.

Question: But was that a wrong call? It made the job harder.

Hon. Bill Blair: (inaudible), I'm — I'm not going to make judgements on — on anybody's — anyone else's good faith efforts to restore peace and order for the people of Ottawa.

Moderator: Okay. Thanks, everyone.

Question: Should the RCMP take over at this point? Like, should they just take over? Ottawa police doesn't have a chief anymore. Who is in charge?

Hon. Bill Blair: I mean, again, that's — that's actually not a matter that I'm responsible for, and — and frankly, I don't think it's appropriate to — to make that speculative a comment. But what I do believe is it's absolutely important for law enforcement and all orders of government to work together. It's an important job to do for the people of Ottawa and we are committed to getting it done. Thanks very much, everyone.

Question: Thank you.

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